

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 9969

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, MMOL, TH

SUBJ: AMMUNITION FOR THAILAND

REF: BANGKOK 8998 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: WHILE THE THAI MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS EMPHASIZES WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. MILITARY FORCES AND CREATION OF TIES WITH HANOI, THE THAI MILITARY SEEK CONCRETE INDICATIONS THAT THE U.S. WILL NOT ABANDON THAILAND. ANY PRECIPITATE RETROGRADE OF U.S. MATERIEL FROM THAILAND WILL BE TAKEN AS A SIGNAL THAT WE INTEND TO ABANDON THAILAND. RETENTION OF U.S. MATERIEL STOCKS, PARTICULARLY AMMUNITION, IN THAILAND WOULD, ON THE OTHER HAND, GIVE A SIGNAL OF CONTINUING U.S. COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT AND SMOOTH THE PROCESS OF FORCE WITHDRAWAL. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FALL OF CAMBODIA AND CURRENT EVENTS IN LAOS ACCENTUATE THE PROBLEM OF ARMED INSURGENTS ON THAILAND'S EASTERN AND NORTHERN BORDERS. THE FALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM HAS CAUSED CONCERN IN THE RTG OVER WHETHER THAILAND CAN CONTINUE TO DEPEND UPON THE USG AS A SHIELD AGAINST
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COMMUNIST AGGRESSION. THE THAI MINISTRY OF FOREIGN

AFFAIRS IS REACTING TO THE NEW SITUATION BY STRESSING WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. MILITARY FORCES AND COOPERATION WITH NORTH VIETNAM AND THE NEW COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS OF RVN AND CAMBODIA. SIMULTANEOUSLY, THE THAI MILITARY ARE SEEKING CONCRETE INDICATIONS THAT THE USG WILL NOT ABANDON THAILAND. BUT THE MANNER IN WHICH WE EXPEDITIOUSLY REMOVED SOME OF THE RECOVERED AIRCRAFT FROM CAMBODIA AND RVN, AND OUR OBVIOUS RUSH TO REMOVE MILITARY MATERIEL AND FORMER GKR/RVN SECURITY ASSISTANCE SUPPLIES HAVE TENDED TO LEND CREDENCE TO THE BELIEF OF SOME THAI OFFICIALS THAT THE USG WILL ABANDON THAILAND.

2. A COURSE OF ACTION EXISTS WHICH WILL PROVIDE THE RTG AN INDICATION THAT WE DO NOT INTEND TO ABANDON THAILAND, ALLOW US TO RETAIN OUR OPTIONS WITHOUT FORMAL ICOMMITMENT, AND SAVE THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SIGNIFICANT MONEY. THIS ALTERNATIVE IS TO RETAIN DOD RESERVE STOCKS OF AMMUNITION IN THAILAND, SAFEGUARDED AND MAINTAINED BY THE RTG, WITH DOD RETAINING TITLE. THE PRESENCE OF U.S. AMMUNITION STOCKS IN THAILAND WOULD PROVIDE CONFIDENCE, AS THE RTG WILL ASSUME THAT THE AMMUNITION WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO THAI FORCES IN AN EMERGENCY. DOD WOULD REALIZE SIGNIFICANT COST SAVINGS BY NOT HAVING TO PAY FOR TRANSPORTATION TO OTHER STORAGE LOCATIONS, AND BY THE RTG ASSUMING SECURITY AND MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY.

3. IN ADDITION, AMMUNITION STOCKS IN THAILAND THAT COULD BE USED FOR FY 75 AND FY 76 FUNDED MAP REQUIREMENTS SHOULD NOT BE RETROGRADED, BUT SHOULD REMAIN THAILAND AND BE USED TO FILL MAP REQUIREMENTS, THUS SAVING PCH&T COSTS. FOR EXAMPLE, OF THE GROUND MUNITIONS NOW AVAILABLE IN THAILAND, ABOUT \$2.8 MILLION CAN BE APPLIED TO THE FY 75 FUNDED REQUIREMENT AND THE PLANNED FY 76 REQUIREMENT.

4. IT IS OUR FIRM BELIEF THAT WE SHOULD NOT REMOVE AMMUNITION STOCKS THAT WOULD PROVIDE FOR THAI AND CONTINGENCY U.S. NEEDS IN THIS AREA. CURRENT MAP PLANS
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FOR THAILAND ARE BASED UPON ONLY A 47-DAY RESERVE OF MUNITIONS, ALTHOUGH 60 DAYS IS THE PROGRAM LEVEL APPROVED BY CINCPAC. THE 47-DAY LEVEL HAS NOT BEEN ACHIEVED BECAUSE IN THE PAST, THE LARGE U.S. FORCE PRESENCE IN THAILAND HAS IN EFFECT SERVED AS A SUBSTITUTE, ENABLING FIRST PRIORITY IN ALLOCATING THAILAND'S LIMITED MILITARY FUNDS TO GO TO OTHER PRESSING NEEDS. WE ESTIMATE THAT ACHIEVEMENT OF A 47-DAY RESERVE OF

AMMUNITION WOULD COST \$50.2 MILLION, BASED ON CURRENT WEAPONS MIX AND DENSITY. BY VALUE, THIS AMOUNT REPRESENTS ONLY ONE-SEVENTH OF TOTAL U.S. MUNITIONS NOW IN THAILAND. COSTS BY FORCE ARE:

RTA \$24.7 MILLION
RTAF \$11.4
RTN \$5.1
RTMC \$9.0
TOTAL \$50.2 MILLION

5. WE KNOW THAT \$30.6 MILLION OF THE MUNITIONS ARE CONTAINED IN USMACTHAI SUPPORT GROUP STOCKS ALREADY IN THAILAND. THESE STOCKS SHOULD REMAIN HERE AS U.S. ASSETS. ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT KNOW THE QUANTITY AND VALUE OF USAF MUNITIONS IN THAILAND, WE BELIEVE THAT MOST OF THAILAND'S NEEDS FOR AIR MUNITIONS ARE AVAILABLE. THESE STOCKS SHOULD REMAIN ALSO. I HAVE ASKED COMUSMACTHAI TO FORWARD THE DETAILS OF OUR ESTIMATES WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

6. THE CRUX OF THIS MATTER, OUTSIDE OF THE CONSIDERABLE COST SAVINGS TO THE USG, IS OUR NEED TO INDICATE TO THE THAI THAT WE ARE NOT PICKING UP OUR MARBLES AND GOING HOME, LEAVING THEM TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES MILITARILY. THEY NEED A RESERVE LEVEL AS INDICATED ABOVE; A GOOD PART OF THE MATERIEL IS ALREADY IN THAILAND (ALSO INDICATED); AND IT APPEARS ONLY LOGICAL THAT THE USG SAVE ITSELF MONEY AND STORE SELECTED MATERIEL IN THAILAND--UNDERSTANDING THAT IT MAY BE USED BY THAI FORCES WITH OUR PERMISSION IN THE EVENT OF INVASION OR MAJOR INSURGENT UPRISING, AND NOT FOR TRAINING OR OTHER RTG PURPOSES. ITS STATUS AS U.S. CONFIDENTIAL

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PROPERTY WOULD GIVE SOME SUBSTANCE TO OUR CONTINUING SEATO COMMITMENT.

7. WE BELIEVE THE RTG WILL AGREE TO STORE, SECURE AND MAINTAIN THE U.S. RESERVE AT NO COST TO USG, UNDER THE ABOVE CONDITIONS, AND WE RECOMMEND RETROGRADE OF SPECIFIED ITEMS BE HALTED AND IMMEDIATE ACTION TAKEN TO OBTAIN APPROVAL FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH RTG ON THIS MATTER.

8. WE MUST ALSO CONSIDER THE FACT THAT ALL MATERIEL WE DO RETROGRADE MUST CLEAR RTG CUSTOMS, AND THERE IS NO WAY IT CAN BE MOVED OUT OF THAILAND WITHOUT RTG KNOWLEDGE AND CLEARANCE. IN OUR OPINION, LEAVING A RESERVE IN-COUNTRY WOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARD ASSURING THAI

COOPERATION IN RETROGRADE MOVEMENT OF THE REMAINDER,
NOT NEEDED HERE, WHICH CONSTITUTES BY FAR THE LARGER
PORTION (ABOUT SIX-SEVENTHS) OF TOTAL U.S. AMMUNITION
IN-COUNTRY.
WHITEHOUSE

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